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SUBJECT: GHANA ELECTIONS: AKUFO-ADDO NOT READY TO CONCEDE

¶1. (U) On December 31, one day after the Electoral Commission (EC) announced the results of the presidential runoff election, New Patriotic Party (NPP) candidate Nana Akufo-Addo called a press conference at his residence in East Legon to announce that his party had compiled the evidence to back up their claims of intimidation by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) in the Volta Region. He asserted that in most of the polling stations in 10 (out of a total 22) constituencies in the NDC stronghold of Volta, NPP party agents were not allowed to carry out their roles. He said that the NPP was on its way to the EC right after the press conference to present "a whole box of evidence," including medical reports and police statements, that would prove the party's allegations. To back up his statement, Akufo-Addo produced two battered and bandaged NPP polling agents to step in front of the cameras.

¶2. (U) During questioning by the assembled media, Akufo-Addo expressed confidence in the EC, and his satisfaction at their intervention. He made it clear that his claims would be based on NDC intimidation, and not on any actions of the EC. Asked if he was worried about the tension in the country, Akufo-Addo said that he was troubled by the violence that was being unleashed by the NDC on supporters of the NPP. He said that residents of his Nima property (in an NDC-dominated area of Accra) were sleeping at his East Legon property because they had been "brutalized." NDC threats and vandalism continued to intimidate members of the NPP; his billboards in Accra were being defaced, and NDC-initiated text messages and physical assaults continued to create tension.

¶3. (SBU) Although some questions were pointed (What proof do you have? and Are you accusing the EC of complicity?), no journalist had the temerity to ask whether or not Akufo-Addo had considered conceding the election. This may have been because the candidate was surrounded by a vociferous and palpably cranky entourage inside his courtyard, and an even larger throng of brazenly angry supporters pounding on his gate and being held at bay by a phalanx of armed police outside his home. Radio Joy FM, the station that had prematurely projected an Atta-Mills victory, was not present, and a reporter for Radio Gold, the NDC-leaning station that had spewed inflammatory anti-NPP rhetoric the day before, was refused entry to Akufo-Addo's property and then driven away by the jeering crowd outside.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT. To his credit, Akufo-Addo's press statement was understated. He asked only that his party be given a fair hearing, and that democracy in Ghana be given a chance, without being hijacked by the opposition party. He was clearly placing any hope for an NPP victory in convincing the EC to reconsider returns from the Volta Region, and not in overcoming the NDC lead by a big win in the Tain constituency during the final round of voting set to take place this Friday. Both eventualities seem like a long shot: the NDC is likely to win in Tain (Atta-Mills, John Mahama, and Jerry Rawlings have already decamped from Accra and are campaigning there, while Akufo-Addo did not appear to have

any clear plan to try to win the hearts and minds of Tain), and none of the international observer teams reported the kind of large-scale intimidation in Volta Region that Akufo-Addo claimed to have evidence of. There is also the chance that any claims will be balanced by counter-claims by the NDC regarding NPP strongholds such as Kumasi. Perhaps most telling of where the NPP is headed was the overall mood at his press conference, which was one of shell-shock and despair, not of a fighter about to muster the energy to make a last-round knockout.

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